DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 221 776 CG 016 202

AUTHOR Bowser, Philip B., Ed.
TITLE School Psychology and Declining School Budgets: Answering Hard Questions in Economically Hard Times.
INSTITUTION Iowa State Dept. of Public Instruction, Des Moines. Div. of Special Education.; National Association of School Psychologists, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Feb 82
NOTE 64p.; An Assistance to the States Committee project.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; Cost Effectiveness; Counseling Effectiveness; *Counselor Role; *Delivery Systems; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Problems; Psychological Evaluation; *Pupil Personnel Services; *Retrenchment; School Counseling; School Funds; *School Psychologists

ABSTRACT

Taxpayer revolts have led to increasing concerns about accountability, particularly among ancillary school service personnel. Approximately 150 questionnaires were distributed to school psychologists to obtain a sample of responses to questions commonly asked by parents, educators and the community. Their responses dealt with the role and function of the school psychologist, benefits of the services and consumer satisfaction, staffing patterns and supervision, salary, and accountability and change. Psychologists indicated that, ideally, they would like to divide their time equally between problem identification and intervention planning, direct intervention including prevention, and applied research. However, the findings suggest that budget problems have made such a role difficult to achieve. (JAC)

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# SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND DECLINING SCHOOL BUDGETS:

## Answering Hard Questions in Economically Hard Times

Edited by

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An Assistance to the States Committee Project
The National Association of School Psychologists
February, 1982

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# INTRODUCTION

This project from the Assistance to the States committee began with an article by Jeff Grimes. That article attempted to take common questions about school psychological services that arose during the taxpayer revolts of the early 1980's, and use those questions to point up actions that could be taken by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), state affiliates, and individual psychologists. Given the wide variety of sources from which criticism could occur, it seemed reasonable to attempt to model answers to some of those 'tough questions.'

Approximately 150 questions were distributed to the state affiliates to obtain a sample of school psychologist responses. These answers were then edited into the current format. In order to make the publication of interest to non-psychologists as well as school psychologists, a conversational tone was adopted. In most cases, the editor is speaking directly to the reader, as though the reader had asked the question. This should make the document more interesting to read.

Some of the responses were easy to edit into a simple answer. But a few questions required local information or otherwise did not apply across the fifty states and Canada. These questions are left open in the hope that readers will formulate their own answers, incorporating an understanding of the local conditions. In some instances, the open questions point out opportunities for individual or state affiliate research.

Because the answers are edited from practicioner responses, these answers in no way represent an official NASP attitude on any of the issues. There are probably many answers with which the reader will disagree--and that is as it should be. Each question has many possible answers. The reader is encouraged to use these answers as a starting point for developing a personal opinion, especially for those questions which have not as yet received much thought. With luck, some of these items will point out actions which practicioners need to take now to ensure that school psychology takes on a desirable form in the future.

Many people were invaluable in the compiling of this document. The appendix lists those people who took the time to answer their share of questions distributed by the state affiliates. The rough drafts were reviewed by Jeff Grimes, Charlene Talkington, John Williams, Rosemarie Robertson, and special friend Sue McCullough. The editor appreciates the comments and encouragements.

The text was prepared on an Apple II Plus microcomputer using the Applewriter text editor program. Final drafts were typed on an Epson MX-100 printer loaned by Paul Zegers.

Philip B. Bowser
Editor

February, 1982

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

Philip Bowser is currently a school psychologist in Roseburg, Oregon. He arrived on the West coast almost by mistake, having worked as a school psychologist in North Carolina and Iowa after leaving his home in St. Louis. He has published several articles on school psychology, and has been invited to conduct in-service classes for school psychologists. Following a term as president of the Iowa school psychologists' association, he was invited to participate in the Spring Hill and Olympia conferences on the future of school psychology.

He has a four-year old son, Nathan. His hobbies include photography and writing. Recently, he became a partner in a computer education and software company, Applied Computer EnterpriseS (ACES).

His main shortcoming is an inability to say 'no' when Jeff Grimes has a good idea for a project. He says he has enjoyed the chance to work for the ATS committee.

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY AND DECLINING SCHOOL BUDGETS

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# SECTION ONE

## Role and Function

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST DO?

Basically, the school psychologist applies the science of psychology to problems of learning, development, or adaptive social behavior which are of concern to school staff or parents. To complicate matters, the field of psychology does not speak with one voice. There are many different approaches to the study of behavior, and any particular school psychologist will tackle a problem based on the system learned in graduate school. This makes it difficult for a consumer of school psychological services to know in advance what it likely to happen when a child is referred forservice. To know what a school psychologist does, one needs to know the training orientation.

For example, behavioral psychologists believe that most behavior is learned. They will tend to solve problems by studying the child's behavior, identifying factors in the situation which perpetuate the problem behavior, and recommending changes in the way people act towards the child which will encourage more appropriate behavior. You might find behavioral school psychologists spending most of their time in the classrooms.

Other psychologists look for traits or skills which, if poorly developed, could explain the problem. They will tend to study problems by giving a variety of tests to measure a child's strengths and weaknesses. Recommendations for change will generally spring from the pattern of test results. You might find trait school psychologists spending most of their time working with a single child in a quiet room at the local school, or at a diagnostic clinic.

Counselling psychologists look for "bad habits" in thinking, problem solving, and in relating to others. A primary investigation tool for these school psychologists is the interview, and counselling or psychotherapy is often the treatment of choice. You might find school psychologists with a strong counselling background spending most of their time working with single children, groups of children, or families.

These are not all of the possible training backgrounds, but the three examples should show how people with differing backgrounds within psychology would apply the science differently. The goal is to help the schools teach individual children. So in addition to studying single children for teachers, the school psychologist is also available to curriculum supervisors and other policy-makers. Often, if the policy question cannot be

answered by looking at previous research, then the school psychologist can help design and run the needed study. for example, factors which contribute to dropping-out, and the effects of grade retention have both been studied by school psychologists--the results have immediate implications for policy-makers.

Generally, school psychologists will perform other related services to parents and school districts. Inservice education programs help teachers to keep up with current advances, and school psychologists frequently present inservice workshops. Many school districts have committees that determine student eligibility for special education programs, with school psychologists as key committee members. Classes on parenting skills and counselling groups for parents of handicapped children are examples of school psychologist activities.

Although it may be difficult to describe in advance the exact activities of a school psychologist, one can predict that the science of psychology will be brought to bear on the question. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) expects each school psychologist to do only what they have been trained to do. Find out the training background, and you will have a clear idea of what to expect. More often than not, the outcome is an improved educational environment for the referred child.

WHAT IS THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF SERVICES BEING DELIVERED ON A STATEWIDE BASIS?

Here is a chance for the reader to develope an answer that is specific to the particular state.

ARE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES REQUIRED BY LEGISLATION OR ONLY RECOMMENDED OR NEITHER?

NASP asked this question of school psychologists in the United States and Canada. Apparently, the service is not required by law. However, many school district actions are regulated by laws, and school psychologists are frequently hired to help districts comply with these laws. Districts which hire school psychologists generally report the belief that these people are the best trained for the job. Since this choice is not mandated by law, there are school districts in the country which hire lesser-trained people at a lower rate of pay. However, it is probably fair to say that these districts do not receive the full spectrum of services that a fully-trained school psychologist could provide.

HOW MANY INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS DOES A PSYCHOLOGIST DO PER YEAR?

Assessment is only one of several services provided by the school psychologist. But it is one functin that can be easily counted, which makes the statistic appealing to administrators and taxpayers who wonder what their money is buying. By measuring quantity instead of quality, one runs the risk of assuming that all assessments were needed and helpful. Particularly if the system rewards numbers of assessments, one could expect to findexamples of unneeded assessment carried out anyway or assessment procedures shortened in order to get a few more done. This type or record-keeping misses the point.

What we hope to accomplish by providing school psychological service is child behavior change. If the child is not reading well, reading should be improved by following the psychologist's recommendations. If the child repeatedly hits others with little provocation, the school psychologist should be able to suggest procedures to reduce the frequency of the hitting. Instead of asking "How many assessments per year", try asking "How much change in child behavior resulted?"

WHAT ARE THE INDISPENSABLE FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS?

The basic function is to help school staff and parents make decisions based on data rather then impressions. The school psychologist, by training, employs the scientific method when engaged in problem- solving. The problem is made specific so that it can be measured reliably. Measurements are taken, and action plans drawn based on these measurements and the results of research already conducted. Changes are made based on the action plan, and their effects are then checked to see if the initial hypotheses were correct.

Individual psychologists may engage in many activities, but this basic procedure for problem-solving cuts across most service delivery styles. Data-based decision-making assistance is probably the most indispensable function.

WHAT SERVICES THAT ARE NOW PROVIDED COULD BE DELETED IF FINANCES REQUIRED IT AND WHAT EFFECT WOULD THIS HAVE REALISTICALLY?

This is a tough question--we do not currently have data to indicate which functions are the most valuable. In addition, we expect that as each school building uses the school psychologist in a slightly different way, local rankings of the important functions would differ.

We suggest looking at the needs of the school building and comparing those needs to the skills of the psychologist assigned. Look for those activities which produce the most beneficial changes for the children, and avoid eliminating those functions.

HOW ARE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS SPENDING THEIR TIME? EVIDENCE?

The assignment has a lot to do with how time is spent--some school psychologists have administrative duties, for example. When you ask school psychologists around the country how time is spent, you are likely to be told that 60-90% of the time is spent doing testing to justify the placement of handicapped students. Included in that time is test scoring, reporting the results to parents and teachers, writing reports, and attending multidisciplinary staffings. The other 10-40% is spent in a variety of tasks: counselling, behavior management, inservice, research, consultation with teachers regarding gifted students or other concerns, and participation in various school district committees. In sparsely populated sections of the country, simply driving from one school to the next could occupy as much as 25% of the time. Many school psychologists will spend one or two days per year in professional association meetings. These meetings generally have a skills development component, and a business meeting. Not all professional association meetings are held during school hours, so a portion of participation in a professional association is on the employe's own time.

MY AUNT IS A TEACHER AND SHE SAID THAT ALL HER PSYCHOLOGIST DOES IS TEST. IS THIS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO HANDLE THIS 'RESOURCE'?

Probably not. Asking a school psychologist to do testing only is like only using the radio on a new car. You may like the music, but it won't get you very far!

Tests have their place, but it is probably more effective to ask the school psychologist to help you with a question that you have regarding a problem child. As you would

allow your family physician to choose the treatment for your illness, allow the school psychologist to choose the method of studying the problem. The solution may involve testing--it may not.

This writer once knew of a parent who called in asking for an IQ test for her child. She had heard that the school psychologist could give IQ tests. As the two talked, it became clear that the problem of concern to the mother was bed-wetting. She feared that if she called in asking for help in bed-wetting, she wouldn't get any help! Obviously, the IQ test would have been of little help in this situation.

It is appropriate to consult the school psychologist when you have a question regarding a child's educational progress, skills development, or adaptive social behavior. But do not ask for a test--let the psychologist decide if a test is needed.

FROM T.V., MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, AND ALL THAT LARRY P. STUFF--I'VE HEARD THAT TESTING IS NOT A GOOD THING. SHOULD PSYCHOLOGISTS ALLOW THIS TO GO ON?

The misunderstanding should not be allowed to go on. Tests are simply a system for observing skills and how those skills are used in particular situations. Of course, some tests are better than others, making proper test selection an important part of the school psychologist's job. The objections that come from test use are usually created by the decisions that were made by people.

There seems to be a misconception that once a test is given, the results automatically dictate what happens next. The people who use and interpret tests need to stand up and take some responsibility for being a part of that decision-making process. In particular, school psychologists should prevent the further spread of 'test hysteria' by letting the public know what school psychologists do, and how those decisions are reached. Tests are misused at times--we all need to work against that--but we do not need to throw away the ruler because the home-made cabinet does not fit through the door!

DO WE REALLY NEED PSYCHOLOGISTS? CAN'T THE TEACHERS PICK OUT THOSE CHILDREN WHO NEED SPECIAL HELP?

Assume for a moment that your child is the one who needs special help. How would you like the system to operate?

Schools have tried letting teachers pick the ones who need the extra help. There is plenty to do in a classroom

without having to identify children with special needs, too. Since no one person can have all of the information at hand, schools are now using a team approach. Each team member studies the child from their own experience and background of training. Parents are encouraged to be a part of this team. When several people have the chance to talk about the same child at one time, the situation usually becomes very clear--there are no missing pieces to the puzzle.

The team approach also enables the evaluation process to be a bit more objective. The classroom teacher spends six hours a day with the children, involved in a very personal learning process. It is extremely difficult to objective under these circumstances, and unfair to expect that of the classroom teacher. It is not unfair to expect that of the school psychologist.

Frequently the type of special help that is needed can be provided in the regular classroom. By involving the school psychologist, new ideas can be generated to help the child. School psychologists can foster changes for the benefit of children without placement outside the regular class.

## WHAT ARE THE TRAINING REQUIREMENTS FOR A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST'S CERTIFICATION?

These requirements vary from state to state. A Master's degree is usually the bare minimum entry level. However, NASP and various states favor an intermediate degree level corresponding to about one year beyond the Master's level, or about 60 graduate hours. This amount of work would take at least two years beyond a Bachelor's degree. Typically, the second year gives a chance for on-the-job training through an internship.

Coursework for the graduate degrees typically include:

- --human development
- --psychology of learning
- --study of normal personality
- --group measurement
- --statistics and research design
- --individual assessment
- --diagnosis of learning problems
- --study of exceptional children
- --behavior management
- --counseling and interviewing
- --curriculum and methods of instruction
- --school organization

WHAT AREAS ARE BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' AREA OF EXPERTISE?

Each school psychologist is expected to perform only those services for which they have training. So your school psychologist may be able to adequately deal with the areas that follow. Most school psychologists would probably refer these situations to other professionals:

--chronic severe emotional illness
--probems requiring medical management
--chronic severe family dysfunctions
--sexual or physical abuse to a child
--life-threatening crisis situations

To the extent that children with these problems are managed within the school setting, school psychologists can help plan and implement appropriate educational programs.

CAN RURAL AREAS BE SERVED BY PSYCHOLOGISTS IN THE SAME WAY AS URBAN AREAS?

Rural areas can obtain the same type and quality of services as urban areas. The organization and types of administration are usually different because of the large distances between school buildings. For example, if the psychologists operate from a central location, children often need to be brought in to the office. Travelling psychologists need to spend some additional time organizing their next weekly or monthly visit. Occasionally, work days need to be extended in order to make full use of an infrequent visit or to accomodate travel time. Recruitment of psychologists for rural areas may be difficult, but the effort should be made to obtain high-quality staff. The service is an important one to have available.

WHAT STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS HAVE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS PRESENTED TO SCHOOL PERSONNEL?

--behavioral observation
--behavioral management
--task analysis
--dealing with mildly emotionally handicapped children
--understanding 94-142
--conducting affective education discussion groups
--understanding educational tests

This list does not include all possible inservice programs, but should give an idea of some areas that are options.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO PREVENT CHILDREN'S PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY HAPPEN?

Prevention takes two forms. First, there is the locating of people who are very much likely to develop a problem. School psychologists help these "at-risk" children by conducting screening to identify them. Programs designed to meet their needs and avoid larger problems can then be placed in action.

Secondly, psychologists can help to design environments which promote healthy development for all members. A "top-down" approach is often cost-effective. By involving top administrators in a committment to developing healthy environments, garnishing support for affective education, parent education, and continuous progress models for instruction is easier. Consultation and in-service education projects also help to develop a healthy environment, but on a more informal level.

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DELIVERY OF SERVICES? IS THAT THE BEST MANNER TO ORGANIZE AND HOW DO YOU KNOW?

One boss and one worker.
Yep.
We have always done it that way.

Oh--that was a serious question??? Well...

There is probably no typical organizational structure. In some parts of the country, school psychological services are provided from the mental health division. In other areas, they are provided by local school districts. Another system is for several districts to band together, each sharing the costs and services of one or more school psychologists.

Although some school psychologists seem to prefer to wait in an office for a call, there are some benefits to setting up a schedule. For example, if the psychologist was scheduled to arrive in a certain elementary school every Wednesday afternoon, teachers could do advance planning to use the psychologist. Appointments could be set with students or parents. The staff could become used

to the presence of a part-timer in the building, contributing to an improved working relationship.

Some school psychologists work almost entirely in a diagnostic clinic setting, just to add to the confusion of the consumer. But regardless of the setting or service delivery model, there is usually a supervisor for the psychologist. The supervisor is in charge of ensuring that quality service is provided. Generally, a personnel evaluation system is used to observe a psychologist's practice, document exemplary actions, and provide a plan of assistance to correct actions which are not as satisfactory. Since the building principal is ultimately responsible for everything that happens in the school, the psychologist often has a local supervisor as well in the form of that principal. As you could imagine, having two bosses could lead to conflict--and it sometimes does!

In addition to all of the other skills, good school psychologists have the flexibility to adapt to the various needs and rules of separate schools. Conversely, the need to adjust to the constantly changing environment can contribute to an early switch to a more stable job.

## SECTION TWO

### Service Delivery, Consumer Satisfaction, and Benefits of the Service

WHO RECEIVES THE SERVICES OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST--TEACHERS, CHILDREN, ADMINISTRATORS, PARENTS, OTHER SUPPORT PERSONNEL?

All of the above, plus others in the community such as social workers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, psychologists in private practice, and various health professionals.

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE CASE LOAD OF A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST?

The most common indicator of case load is the number of students from which referrals can be taken. A nation-wide survey conducted by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) and Division 16 of the American Psychological Association (APA) in 1979 found that most of the psychologists reported 2500 or more students in their area of responsibility. There are nationwide and local exceptions to this.

Psychologists assigned to buildings which have many special education students generally have lower case ratios. Excessive travel time can also be figured into the case load. A committment to excellence can also produce lower ratios--one psychologist for 1500 students is generally thought to be optimum.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL TIME IS ALLOCATED TO DIRECT SERVICE TO CONSUMERS?

Here is another chance to study your agency and prepare your own answer.

HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE SERVED DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY? IS THIS APPRORPIATE?

When working on this question, keep in mind the standard of 'child behavior change'. This will help you to decide if the direct or indirect approach is 'appropriate' for your setting. Ultimately, we want students to be better learners of academic material and social skills. How is this best done in your assignment area?

ISN'T IT A WASTE OF MONEY AND EFFORT TO INVEST IN ALL THOSE KIDS WHO WILL DROP OUT OF SCHOOL ANYWAY OR NEVER BE ABLE TO STAND ON THEIR OWN?

It is easy to feel discouraged about the progress made by hard-to-teach students. But this line of thinking assumes that we can predict who will ultimately succeed in school--and we cannot. Children are not predestined to turn out in any particular way. They change because of their contacts with people, especially those people who are teachers. It is important that State money be used to provide the best education for each individual child that we know how to develop.

In this way, we prevent some students from becoming members of the welfare roles or state institutions. Ultimately, it is much less expensive to educate than to incarcerate.

HAVE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC BEEN SURVEYED AS TO THEIR FELT NEEDS FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

Apparently not. This would probably be a good project for a State association.

IF WE CUT FUNDING FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS, WHO WILL COMPLAIN BESIDES SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS? DO WE REALLY NEED THEM?

We would expect people who have had contact with school psychological services--mainly teachers, principals, parents, and students--to complain if the service was cut. How well one values a service will depend to a great extent on how much one knows about the service. If you have not been a part of the process, school psychology is likely to look like a mysterious, unneeded frosting on the school cake. We would also expect districts with good psychologist/student ratios to complain more loudly than districts where the psychologist is clearly outnumbered and overworked. If you have had the chance to observe a change for the better in a child because the school psychologist was involved, you would probably complain about cuts in funding, too.

We need the school psychologists because no other profession has the training to provide direct service to students, diagnostic service for parents, consultation for

teachers, and liason with other community agencies. We would have to hire several various professionals to equal the combination of services available from a single school psychologist.

HOW DO YOU KNOW THOSE PEOPLE WHO RECEIVE YOUR SERVICES DESIRE THAT SERVICE?

The desire for service is typically measured by the number of times school psychologists are asked to help during the school year. Counting referral forms can give an estimate of only those formal requests, yet the number of referrals goes up each year. If you were to go through special education files to determine what services are most often requested, school psychology would lead the list. Consumers are requesting more service. Also, administrative staff generally ask for more school psychologist time per week, rather than less when needs are assessed. Even in times of declining enrollemnt, the requests for school psychological services stay at a high level.

BRIEFLY LIST THE BENEFITS OF HAVING PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY.

The main reason for having psychological services in the schools is to individualize education. By that we mean that each student is given the best combination of programs, educational techniques, and specific therapies that we know how to provide. It is towards this goal that school psychologists work.

Problems that children are having in school are often stated as general concerns that something is not quite right. Often it is the school psychologist who specifies the general concerns of parents and teachers so that the problem is defined in managable terms. This is easier for the school psychologist to do since that person is not embroiled in the problem on a daily basis. The psychologist also has the scheduling flexibility to meet with all of the people who have important information about the child in question. In graduate school, the psychologist is taught how to take data from a wide variety of sources and synthesize this information into a coherent description of the child. From this investigative process, a diagnosis of the problem can be tendered.

At this point, steps can be taken to deal with the problem. The training of the psychologist helps to

facilitate the ability of school staff, parents, and community agencies to plan together for the benefit of the child. Since the psychologist is functioning with an understanding of the school system, recommendations and treatment plans are more likely to be at a reasonable difficulty level. As the situation changes, the psychologist is available to help the child, the family, and school staff cope with the transition.

In addition, school psychologists receive training in research methods which can help them determine what are the best educational practices for specific types of children. Psychologists are helpful in identifying children who are potentially at-risk so that help can begin before the problem gets very far out of hand. Since many of the skills that school psychologists use on a daily basis are also of value to parents and teachers, classes are often taught to these two groups to improve skill levels. Inservice education and parent classes are additional services usually not known by the general public.

Finally, it should be noted that the service is provided to children and families based on need--not on the financial situation of the family. These are the benefits of school psychological services.

## WHAT ARE THE MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' SERVICES?

Child behavior change is the main measurable outcome. If the child has been cursing or hitting, we can count how often the problem behavior occurs before the intervention and then check again afterwards to measure change. This is the basic procedure, and it applies to reading skill as well as behavioral problems.

Attempts are made to measure psychologist effeciency by counting the number of tests given or the number of contacts made, but these systems miss the point. Many tests and many contacts do not necessarily mean that anything of importance to the child has changed. We recommend measuring child behavior change instead.

Some states are trying this system. Iowa, for example, requires psychologists to report the effects of the service. In 1980-81, 73% of the referred children showed a change in behavior as a result of school psychologist intervention. about 12% did not, and the remaining 15% had moved away or the data was not available. These are statewide averages.

IN BUSINESS WE USE MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES (MBO) FOR PLANNING. DO YOU HAVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WITH BEHAVIORALLY STATED OUTCOMES?

As you might expect, each school system goes about planning a little differently. There are some areas, such as Mesa Arizona, that develop a yearly Psychological Services Plan for each school building. Specific goals are agreed upon at the start of the school year, reviewed at mid-year, and then evaluated at the end of the year. Other districts use Goal Attainment Scales. There is a wide variety of management systems, and naturally, some are better than others.

HOW SHOULD PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES HELP--WHAT'S THE BOTTOM LINE?

The bottom line is this: school psychologists are capable of providing a wide range of services to the children, their parents, and the school staff. Too often, the service is characterized as testing or counseling only. This leads to underemployment, which should be of concern to those of you who want each dollar to stretch as far as it can. Rarely do school systems employ their school psychologists fully.

Rather than limit school psychologists to testing special education students, the psychologist should be available to all. If a parent or teacher has a question about a child's behavior, academic progress, or general development, the school psychologist should be available to help deal with the question. The science of psychology has much to say to help teachers and parents function more effectively. The school psychologist is the bridge to that information, and the interpretor to make the abstract practical.

DOES YOUR SERVICE MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE QUALITY OR QUANTITY OF EDUCATION? HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Some school psychologists began as teachers, then went back to school to pick up additional training. These people have had the opportunity to view the service from both sides--they know that a fully functioning school psychologist can add much to the quality of education. Teachers find that they gain access to information, find support, and learn new ways to deal with situations because of their contacts with the school psychologist.

Another way to look at the educational impact of the school psychologist is to view the change in the classroom when the identified problem child becomes better. Many children are referred for disruptive behavior, which takes teacher time away from the children who have no identified educational problem. These so-called 'normal' children benefit indirectly when the school psychologists improves the situation for a problem child. Besided helping those with learning or behavior difficulties, the quality and quantity of education is improved for the class as a whole.

WOULDN'T IT MAKE MORE SENSE TO USE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST MONEY TO HIRE MORE TEACHERS? WOULDN'T THAT YIELD THE SAME OUTCOME?

It is doubtful. True, teachers do many of the same basic activities. They talk with the students, they evaluate progress, they work with the parents. Teachers and school psychologists share many of the same goals and a similar philosophical approach to public schooling. What most regular teachers lack is depth in specific areas, and a background in psychology that forms a model for making recommendations. Besides specialized information, school psychologists bring a process for dealing with problems to the public schools. The process describes a rational, data-based approach to making decisions. Few teachers receive training in this.

Using money to hire more teachers will bring down the class sizes, and this is certainly a step in the right direction. But school psychologists effect changes in the classroom environment, regardless of the class size. Just hiring more teachers will not produce this type of change. Buying more sparkplugs for your automobile will not help if what you really need is a tune-up!

HOW DO THE SERVICES OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST POSITIVELY EFFECT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN?

This seemed like a good place for the practicioners reading this document to review their own practices. What services do YOU provide that positively effect the education of children?

COULD YOU ACCOMPLISH YOUR STATED GOALS WITH LESS STAFF? (LET'S EXAMINE YOUR GOALS WITH THAT THOUGHT IN MIND.)

Few districts find that they can make full use of the psychologists they now employ. It is doubtful that the total spectrum of services can be provided with less staff.

HOW DO YOU EVALUATE BENEFITS AND OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS? IS THIS ADEQUATE?

Here is another question that is best answered on the local level. Reader, does your hiring agency have a benefit/outcome evaluation system? Is it used systematically? Does it help the practicioner or just generate statistics that go into some file? The system is probably adequate if the system has multiple benefits. Both administrators and field personnel should be able to use the data to make changes in service delivery.

There are a number of systems available to help you in this quest. Continuous monitoring, goal attainment scaling, and the Iowa Psychologist Data Management System are all ready--right now--to be implemented in your area. Even if you doubt the value of keeping such data, imagine the effect on your school board if you could show that 79% of your contacts resulted in positive behavior change for students. One intermediate agency in Iowa was able to document that rate with the data management system. Not a bad statistic to have lying around!

## SECTION THREE

## Staffing Patterns and Supervision

HOW MANY PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE EMPLOYED STATE-WIDE?

That's a good question! How many school psychologists do you have in your state? You might want to fill in the blank...

--In 1981-82 there were ( ) school psychologists in the State of ( ).

WHAT DOES THE SUPERVISOR OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES DO?

It would be difficult to list all of the roles performed by the supervisor. Perhaps a short list of some of the more important functions would convey the general idea:

--recruits, interviews, recommends new staff for employment.
--attempts to match skills and local district needs when assigning staff.
--is a resource for advances in the field, rules and regulations, and provides second opinions on difficult cases.
--provides inservice activities and models the acquisition of new skills.
--evaluates staff to ensure quality of service.
--represents the department in dealings with other disciplines and the public.
--manages the budget for the psychology department, including purchase of materials and approval of travel expenditures.
--approves various personnel matters such as calendar, leaves, and schedules.
--plans for the future of the program.
--conducts research to determine cost effective systems for service delivery and reports to the special education division and the state department of public instruction.
--cooperates with training institutions to provide for practicum and internship experiences.

HOW MANY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY SUPERVISORS ARE EMPLOYED TO WORK IN AN EDUCATIONAL UNIT?

What is the ratio of supervisors/practicioners in your area?

WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE RATIO OF PSYCHOLOGISTS TO STUDENTS?

Can you take another 'that depends' answer? Factors such as distances between schools, severity of handicapping conditions, etc. need to be considered when deciding on a ratio of psychologists to students. The National Association of School Psychologists recommends that no more than 1500 students be in the catchment area for a single psychologist.

WHAT ARE THE STATE'S PROJECTED NEEDS FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS? DO WE NEED TO ADD OR REDUCE?

Take the total number of students in public schools and divide by 1500. The result should be the minimum number of school psychologists. Chances are good that the state will need to add staff.

HOW WAS THE PSYCHOLOGIST/STUDENT RATIO ESTABLISHED IN THIS STATE AND NATIONALLY?
This varies from state to state. Generally, it results from informed people estimating what would be required to provide a minimum amount of service to the maximum amount of people.

HOW DOES YOUR RATIO COMPARE TO RECOMMENDED RATIO OF PROFESSION GROUPS AND STATE LAWS?

It might be interesting to take the ratio in your area and compare it to other areas. The school psychologists who contributed to this publication are listed in an appendix--give some of them a call.

HOW MANY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS SHOULD A SCHOOL SYSTEM EMPLOY?

School psychologists can provide a great diversity of services. In order to do an adequate job of providing the full range of services, some psychologists suggest that a district employ one psychologist for every 800-1000 students.

When the student population exceeds this ratio, it is

difficult to complete just the assessment which is required under special education regulations. Preventative work, follow-up, and research suffer. The end result is a situation where problems which could be managed at an early stage and at a low cost have to wait until the situation is grave. The cost of management is much greater at that point.

WHAT IS THE WORST RATIO OF PSYCHOLOGISTS TO STUDENTS THAT WOULD STILL BE TOLERABLE TO ALL PARTIES INVOLVED?

1/too many.

(Please keep in mind that all people--be they school psychologists or not--have their limits. Some school psychologists can handle larges masses of students in their catchment area, and do it well. Other cannot. Similarly, teachers vary in their need for assistance. A specific number cannot, and should not, be calculated in response to a question like this.)

HOW ARE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS DISTRIBUTED ACROSS THE STATE?

Since this question is specific to the state level, this publication will have to insert a blank space here. As an individual practicioner, do you know how school psychologists are spread across your state? Check with your state association!

HOW WILL DECLINING ENROLLMENT EFFECT STAFF SIZE?

Times of declining enrollment do not automatically have to result in staff cutbacks. Declining enrollment can be used creatively to bring oversized classes within reasonable limits. Similarly, declining enrollment is the perfect opportunity to adjust school psychologist/student ratios to recommended levels.

Even if staff need to be reduced to meet the budget requirements, why not try for recommended ratios at reduced hours? In this way, the ratios will be in place when/if the economy improves to the point that program expansion can begin again.

IF YOU LOSE PSYCHOLOGISTS ON THIS STAFF THROUGH MOVEMENT WILL YOU REPLACE THESE PROFESSIONALS AND WHY?

If your district is planning a reduction in force (RIF), it would be to your advantage to learn the answer to this question...

WHAT SUPERVISORY SUPPORT DO PSYCHOLOGISTS NEED?

The School Psychology Review (vol. X, No. 4, Fall 1981) has devoted an entire edition to this matter. A few quick points may be helpful.

School psychologists need to work from a psychology department that is organized around a clear philosophy of service. The guiding principles and procedures should be streamlined, and make sense. Materials should be available without undue paperwork. Next, assistance is needed in following the maze of laws, regulations, and advances in the field. Help on particularly difficult cases is a supervisory support function. Finally, continuing professional development is a must.

DO MINORITY CHILDREN REQUIRE THE SERVICES OF THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST?

Minority children should have the same degree of access to school psychological services as any other student. Membership in a minority ethnic group does not automatically require school psychologist involvement.

THIS IS AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, NOT A MENTAL HEALTH CENTER. WHY DO WE HAVE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS AT ALL?

Your question seems to suggest that school psychologists perform only mental health functions. This assumption is in error. Many school psychologists can assist with emotional problems, but that is not their only assignment. Most school psychologists help teachers find the best way to teach academic material or social behavior.

We need school psychologists to personalize the educational process. They do that by applying the science of psychology to the problems that are brought to their attention. If the block to efficient learning is because

of problems in mental health, that issue needs to be dealt with by school staff. It is a waste of teachers' time and taxpayers money to let the situation continue without intervention.

WHY DO WE NEED A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY CONSULTANT AT THE STATE LEVEL?

Imagine a state that has 100 counties, and about five times that many school districts.. Each district can provide their own school psychological services, contract with the private sector, or contract with other state agencies to provide the service. How would you go about insuring that the same level of quality and quantity of services was available to each student in the state?

You need a state level consultant to insure that wide differences in service do not occur across the state. Additionally, the state level consultant can provide up-to-date information to the school psychologists and school districts in the state, and encourage improvement in service delivery and service quality.

WHY CAN'T SUPERINTENDENTS HIRE LESS TRAINED PERSONS TO DO ALL THIS TESTING AND HAVE A FEW 'SUPERVISING' PSYCHOLOGISTS?

They can--and some do. The reason why this is not a widespread pactice is that quality service is cheaper in the long run.

In the first place, test scores do not tell the whole story. If they did, someone could write a book which describes what to do when you get a particular score. But the decisions which arise at schools are generally not that easy. Making these decisions requires knowledge and experience in both education and psychology. Graduate programs in school psychology provide this background.

It often takes a year or more to learn the resources available in a given school building--what the teachers can do and what is unreasonable to expect from them. A certain degree of trust is built up when people work together, and it is doubtful that the distant 'supervisor' would have that degree of trust. When it is time to decide, the person at the school needs to make the judgement call. It is not practical to expect the lessor-trained person to run to the telephone, or to expect the supervisor to understand the problem in depth given this system of service delivery.

# SECTION FOUR

## Personnel and Salary

WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR?

Local people--now is your chance!

HOW EXPENSIVE IS THE COST OF EMPLOYING A PSYCHOLOGIST? WHY SO MUCH?

For the year 1981-82, beginning salaries run between $14,000 and $20,000. Individuals with additional duties, extensive education, or extended contracts could earn more. Salaries in school systems are usually based on years of experience and the amount of education required to prepare for the position. Since school psychologists are often called upon to make major decisions regarding placement or competancy, the responsibility often is compensated for through the salary.

The living expenses in the region are also a factor in the salary. For example, school psychologists earn more in Alaska than in areas where the cost of living is less. In Alberta, Canada, the range of salaries run from $20,000 to $40,000 for the Ph.D. level.

HOW MUCH OF THE BUDGET FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY COMES FROM STATE TAX DOLLARS AND HOW MUCH FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT?

This would vary from school district to school district. If the person reading this publication is a school psychology supervisor, you could probably ask them to put down the book and tell you.

There are many sources of funds. Grants provide some salaries. The local mental health center may provide psychological services to the schools under a contract with the district. Each district has its own way of funding school psychology, but most generally use State and local funds.

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER A FAIR SALARY FOR A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST? HOW DOES THIS COMPARE FOR OTHER PROFESSIONALS?

People who responded to our survey indicated that $17,000 would be a good beginning salary for a Master's level school psychologist. This is about average for educators in 1982. However, educators have received salaries significantly below those found in private industry for decades, and salaries in education have failed to keep pace with inflation for at least the last eight years. The field of education is constantly losing valuable staff to industry, where people receive a rate of pay which is more in keeping with their skill level.

WHY CAN'T WE PAY PSYCHOLOGISTS AS WE DO TEACHERS?

Some districts do pay school psychologists on the same schedule as classroom teachers. People who advocate a higher rate of pay cite additional responsibility, an increased potential for lawsuit, longer hours, the need for additional education before entry into the profession is allowed, and the inclusion of administrative duties as reasons.

HOW ARE SERVICES ORGANIZED IN THIS STATE TO MAXIMIZE ECONOMIC DELIVERY OF SERVICES?

We know that each agency has an organization for delivering services. What we do not know is if those agencies check to see if the current structure--which was probably set up several years ago--is effective under today's conditions. Schools are notoriously conservative, which makes them slow to change. A study of economic delivery of psychological services would be a valuable project for a state level association of psychologists.

COULD TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS BE CURTAILED? WHAT EFFECT?

Large, centralized districts could certainly cut travel expenses by assigning psychologists to 'zones' of schools which are in close proximity. Rural districts, with school buildings in several small towns, would have trouble using this option. A variation on the county circuit preacher has been discussd for days of extreme energy costs. In this system, the psychologist has a string of sleeping rooms in several rural communities. The rooms are donated by district personnel. At the beginning of the week, the psychologist travels to one

school, staying there for several days. Then there is a short journey to the next district, where a visit of several days occurs. The length of the circuit would vary with the location, but the basic idea has the individual returning to the starting point only once in a week or two, rather than nightly.

Neither of these systems should result in a loss of service. It may be difficult to hire people to work under the latter conditions.

ARE PSYCHOLOGISTS ALLOCATED MORE FRINGE BENEFITS THAN OTHER EDUCATORS?

Generally, school psychologists have the same general package of benefits which are negotiated for the teachers in the district. In some districts, the psychologists have their own bargaining unit, and in these locations the benefits could differ.

One could make a case that school psychologists have fewer benefits than classroom teachers in the area of professional liability insurance. Policies which are designed for classroom teachers generally protect school psychologists from suit provided the activity is considered to be 'educational'. So if a child is hurt by a falling bookcase during academic assessment, the psychologist is covered.Now, the closer the activity comes to being 'psychological', the more unprotected is the psychologist. Psychological activities are often considered by insurance agencies to be 'medical', and hence not protected by an 'educational' liability policy. This leaves the school psychologist in an uncertain position.

Since the profession cuts across two distinct fields, the liability issues are not often clear. It is for this reason that the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) has arranged for its members to obtain additional liability insurance tailored to the needs of a school psychologist. But this coverage is at additional cost to the individual.

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE COST PER CHILD FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

We do not have comprehensive data for the 50 states and Canada. However, John Taylor presented some statistics for Lousiana which may be of interest:

A. Number of Psychologists-- 450.
B. Psychologist/student ratio-- 1:4500
C. Average salary & fringe benefits-- $22000.
D. Total budget for 450 people-- $9,900,000.
E. Total public school enrollment-- 2,000,000
F. Total referrals to psychology-- 140,000
G. Number referred as possibly exceptional-- 105,00.
H. Number referred for support service (not exceptional)-- 35,000
I. Average cost/child (total)-- $4.95.
J. Average cost/child (referred only)-- $75.77.
K. If one assumes that without psychological services 95% of the referred children would be served in special education, then special education would have cost the state an additional $52,500,000. Thus, investing $9,900,000 for psychologists saved a net of $42,600,000. This figure does not include support services. These services are essentially provided at no additional cost to the district, particularly in light of the special education savings.

WHY DOES SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE COST MORE PER CAPITA THAN OTHER SERVICES?

We do not think that psychological services cost more. By other services, we are looking at speech therapy, school social work, audiology, guidance/vocational counselors, physical therapists, etc.
In addition, we object to a per capita analysis since it fails to take into account the long range effects of psychological services. For example, if the schools intervene with psychological services at the right time and avoid student involvement with the criminal justice system, for example, the service would become quite a bargain to the taxpayers.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE IN COSTS BETWEEN A PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION OBTAINED THROUGH THE SCHOOLS AND ONE DONE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

When psychologists responded to our survey, we found that prices for independent evaluations were generally higher on the East coast than in the Midwest. Private sector evaluations ranged from $180 to $400. One mental health center said it would provide services at the rate of $125/day instead. If a school psychologist earning $18,000 did 100 evaluations, we could say that each evaluation cost $180. However, psychological evaluations are not the only activity of the school psychologist.

As a result of that evaluation, there will be conferences with the parents, another conference with school staff, and perhaps direct service with the student. More conferences could result if special education placement was a result, and of course there is always follow-up. So it is probably safe to say that services are much cheaper when obtained by in-house staff.

Not all of the information that one could use to make a decision has a neat price tag. For example, here are some additional benefits that accrue from using in-house staff:

--trust that comes from working as a team.
--knowledge of teacher skills, building policy, curriculum, socio-economic factors not readily observed by an outsider in a short period of time.
--in-house staff are present when the crisis arises--there is no need for a phone call.
--loyalty to the system.
--more likely to do a little 'extra' for other team members, such as informal follow-up, home visits, take over a class, free parent classes in the evenings.
--capability of immediate changes in the management program.

## SECTION FIVE

## Accountability and Change

WHAT ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS USE?

Traditionally, school districts have kept track of the number of evaluations, staffings, conferences, and the like. This system has several disadvantages, one of which is the failure to take child behavior change into account. This is an area that needs improvement.

Agencies are attempting to develop better accountability systems. For example, Heartland Education Agency in Ankeny, Iowa is collecting intervention data for computer analysis. Each psychologist reports target behavior, measurement procedure, baseline level of behavior, criterion level, intervention method(s), person implementing program, case review date, and outcome summary. The computer helps the individual psychologist to keep track of key variables, and can provide a written copy of results to demonstrate accountability to local taxpayers.

DO YOU HAVE AN ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT? IS THERE AN EFFORT AT THE STATE LEVEL TO EVALUATE SERVICES?

Does your state do this? More importantly, is it helpful to you as a practicioner? If it is not directly helpful, does it help in indirect ways by satisfying some need for statistics at the state level? If you are trapped in a less than helpful accountability system, how could your state association turn that around for you and make it valuable to practicioners?

CAN YOU DEFINE THESE TERMS AS THEY RELATE TO PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES? -EFFECTIVENESS / -EFFICIENCY / -ECONOMY

Effectiveness and efficiency are synonyms in my dictionary. An effective school psychologist produces change in the behavior of a child, by applying information from the science of psychology. Efficiency seems to imply a minimum of effort in relation to the amount of change, but isn't that being effective?

Economy refers to frugal management of money, materials, time, and equipment. In other words, avoid waste.

I don't understand the purpose of this question.

Say--aren't you my high school English teacher? I thought you looked familiar. Just checking up on me, huh?

WHAT EVIDENCE FROM CONSUMERS EXISTS TO SHOW THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES ARE VALUABLE?

Parents, school administrators, and teachers usually show their appreciation by sending cards of thanks, or letters of commendation to supervisors. Perhaps a more specific proof can be observed when parents approach school boards to petition for more psychological service, and when schools demand additional service from their intermediate agencies.

Consumers also report changes in their children as a result of school psychologist involvement. We hear of improved family life, better grades, increased attention span, reaching out instead of withdrawal. Additionally, we have noticed that the number of referrals from consumers has been rising annually. Would people ask for more of a service that was not valued positively?

HOW EFFECTIVE HAVE PSYCHOLOGISTS BEEN IN PERFORMING THEIR FUNCTIONS? ACCORDING TO THE SCHOOLS? ACCORDING TO PARENTS?

This would be another good project for the local level.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DISCOVER INNEFECTIVE DELIVERY OF SERVICE?

This is an important issue. We suggest you proceed carefully to make sure that no one is damaged unfairly.

First off, how did you make this determination? Did you personally experience ineffective service or did you just hear about it? Make sure that you have your facts straight.

Then, particularly if you personally received ineffective service, go to the school psychologist with the complaint. You may be able to get effective service.

The next step involves the employee's supervisor. Most disagreements should be resolved at this level. If not, you can proceed up the chain of command. State associations often have committees to investigate actions

which are unethical. You could register a complaint with the association, but remember that associations only have jurisdiction over their members. If the employee is not a member, this type of action may not help.

Please remember that psychological services usually require that many people work together to produce a change. There could be several explanations why a given recommendation did not produce the change you wished to see. Plus, some situations took years to develop. In these instances you cannot expect overnight success. But if you are willing to go to the psychologist with your concern, you stand a good chance of getting a second, or a third, or a tenth look, and a higher probability of eventual success.

WHAT ARE FOUR MAJOR COMPLAINTS THAT TEACHERS OR PARENTS HAVE ABOUT SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS?

1. They test too much/they don't test enough.
2. We don't see them enough. They should spend more time in the classroom.
3. It is hard to understand them because they use so much jargon.
4. They do not have all of the answers but they pretend like they do.

DO SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS CAUSE PROBLEMS OR SOLVE PROBLEMS?

Yes! And sometimes, we even prevent problems!

This is a time of social flux. Occasionally, a school psychologist is going to have to report information that parents or schools would not like to hear. In those situations, we are known as problem-makers. We may generate data which is embarassing--for example, an expensive drop-out program may not be preventing the dropping-out. Psychologists generally function from the viewpoint that it is better to know reality than to ignore it; that decisions based on data are likely to be more accurate than those based on guesses. This stand can be seen as creating problems, particularly in very authoritarian supervisory systems.

However, this situation is not limited only to school systems. You will find similar 'problem-makers' in most places of employment. It could be that a school psychologist who never challenges the current system is not doing a good job!

HOW DO YOU MEASURE CHANGES IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, PRODUCTIVITY, SELF-CONTROL, OR SELF-ESTEEM? CAN YOU MEASURE SUCH FACTORS?

Yes, there are techniques for measuring these factors. Generally, one measures the free rate of behavior when no one is attempting to change how well the student is doing. One could count the number of self-depreciating comments, for example, as a way to estimate self-concept. The next step involves continuing the counting, but people are attempting to foster a change. This is commonly called the treatment condition.

Now comes the hard part. To ensure that the treatment is responsible for the change, one must cease the treatment. If teacher actions were really helping the self-concept, to continue the above example, one would expect self-depreciating comments to sneak back during this reversal phase. Reversals are necessary from a research standpoint, but what teacher is going to allow a child to backslide? Who would want to see the problem re-appear just to verify that the change could be attributed to a specific factor?

Your question seems to touch on the issue, "how do you know that psychological interventions work?" In the interest of student well-being, we rarely complete the "experiment" to the point where the exact contributing factor is identified. It is a less exact system, to notice that the positive change occured at the same time as the treatment, but one which seems to be precise enough for the intended purpose.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF KIDS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY HELPED THROUGH DIRECT INTERVENTION? THAT IS, HOW EFFECTIVE ARE YOUR SERVICES?

We would expect this percentage to vary across settings and service models. You will need to insert your local values to answer this question.

COULD SUPPORT STAFF BE INCREASED WHILE THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS BE DECREASED TO OBTAIN THE SAME RESULT?

It sounds like what you want to do is hire three people to do the work of one person. Support people generally have

specialized training in one area; school psychologists are trained to take information from a variety of sources and make a cohesive description of the situation. It seems likely that the same result would not be obtainable. You would have many pieces, but no one responsible for putting the puzzle together.

IS ANYTHING BEING DONE TO INVESTIGATE MORE EFFECTIVE DELIVERY SYSTEMS? WHAT?

This type of research is usually done at the university level. Our survey went out to practicioners in the field. The survey uncovered no local school districts engaged in this type of investigation.

Many school psychologists have the training to conduct this type of study. If the local districts were committed to effective delivery systems, they most likely have the staff to study that question.

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO IMPROVE THE DELIVERY EFFECIENCY AND REDUCE COSTS OF PROVIDING SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

What reduces costs does not always increase effeciency. So some of the ideas that follow are compromises, not examples of the ideal situation:

REDUCE COSTS
--increase caseload
--use word processing equipment for report writing
--hire psychologists on a 10-month contract instead of a 12-month
--pay for services in the summer on a per diem basis

IMPROVE EFFECIENCY
--limit range of services to a key few required by law
--use word processing equipment to speed turn-around time for report typing
--assign psychologists with special skills to schools that need those skills

GRANTED THAT WITH EFFORT ALMOST ANY OPERATION CAN BE MADE MORE EFFECIENT, WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR REDUCING COSTS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

Does your district have a plan for reducing costs? Does it reduce costs without severely restricting services? If your district has a terrific system, let some others in your state association know. We need to spread that type of information around!

WHAT KINDS OF INSERVICE COULD WE GIVE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS TO HELP THEM FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY? (TIME MANAGEMENT, ETC.)

Since school psychology is essentially an information business, training in data processing might be a help. Already, small computers are available to help speed report-writing, keep schedules in order, and sort/recall large amounts of data stored on referred students. In the future, it is likely that some types of assessment could be conducted by computers, as some tests are now computer scored.
As budgets become smaller, it may be necessary to concentrate efforts on activities which help to improve the child's situation. Assessment can be valuable in certain instances, but nowadays tests are applied almost automatically to any child who is referred. The fact that a testing report is on file does not mean that significant factors have changed for the better. Hence, school psychologists who can demonstrate a direct link between service and behavior change will likely have a good chance to survive a tight money economy. This points up an obvious need for inservice.

WHAT INDICATIONS DO YOU HAVE THAT PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE FOR CHILDREN IN THE SCHOOLS?

The type of child referred for psychological services is usually unhappy at school. They cannot do the work that is expected of them. They get into fights. They spend most of their time in the hall or the principal's office. They are too afraid to talk in front of the class. You can spot several of them just by observing the class.

When psychological services make a positive difference, the children no longer stand out it a crowd. They receive instruction which is challenging for them, but not so difficult that it is impossible for them to succeed. They are linked with special materials or teaching techniques which speeds their rate of learning. They fall under environmental conditions which help to shape their behavior to acceptable levels. Mostly, they become more competant students, and this shows in their work and in their faces. It is this type of change that keeps school psychologists on the job.

Now, if you are looking for statistics, we can point to case studies which more systematically document the fact

that school psychological services make a positive difference. We can point to reduced referrals for special education classes. We can point to increased attendance records. We can point to increased achievement test scores. We can point to increased numbers of handicapped children served in regular classes. There are many indications that psychological services make a positive difference.

HOW ACCURATE ARE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS IN DETERMINING THE TOTAL RANGE OF A CHILD'S NEEDS? HOW DO YOU KNOW?

Fortunately, the school psychologist does not have to determine the total range of needs. That would be an impossible job for any one person. Schools today use a group of people, each with particular bits of information about a child, called a 'multidisciplinary team'.

The team is responsible for determining the total range of needs. Included on this team are the parents, the child's regular teacher, special education teachers as needed, and support personnel such as psychologists and speech therapists. Frequently, the building principal or guidance counselor attends the team meeting. By bringing together all of the important adults in a child's life, we run a much smaller risk of missing an important element.

There are situations where the team fails to make the proper recommendation. In this writer's experience, such failures have resulted from withholding of information to manipulate the outcome of the meeting or to prevent embarassment. There are also situations where team members cannot agree on the appropriate action, so incomplete action is taken. Even with these shortcomings, the system is preferable to having one person responsible for determining the entire range of needs and then assigning the treatment(s).

# SECTION SIX

## Alternatives and Futures

WHAT SUPPORT SERVICE PEOPLE (INCLUDING SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS) ARE EMPLOYED BY YOUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM?

Not all schools are likely to have these people on staff, but the following list is fairly complete:

--school psychologist
--occupational therapist
--physical therapist
--speech & language clinician
--school nurse
--counselor
--content area consuntant
--mainstreaming specialist

WHAT SERVICES DELIVERED BY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE DUPLICATED OR OVERLAP WITH SERVICES PROVIDED BY OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES PERSONNEL?

Certain individual activities may overlap. For example, many people can give teachers ideas for curriculum materials or techniques. Many people can give tests and tell staff the results. Counseling is also done by social workers, counselors, and to a lesser extent by principals. Quite a few people in schools have conferences with parents. What is different is that school psychologist present these activities from the training background of a psychologist.

These activities are the vehicle by which information from the field of psychology is transported. The activities themselves are not as important as the system for problem-solving and the data-base that is represented in the activities. Even though many other professionals do some of the same activities as school psychologists, that does not mean that they can replace school psychologists.

WHY CAN'T COUNSELORS DO THE THINGS THAT PSYCHOLOGISTS ARE SUPPOSED TO DO?

There is a basic difference in training.Counseling is only one of several services available from the school psychologist. If counselors went back to school and received additional training, they could do the things

that psychologists are supposed to do.

LET'S BE HONEST--WHAT SERVICES COULD BE PROVIDED BY OTHERS WHO ARE LESS EXPENSIVE?

OK--perhaps some clerical activities, some routine academic testing, some individual counseling, some behavior management programming. But at some point you are going to farm out contact with the child to so many less expensive people that you will significantly hamper the ability of the psychologist to know the child.

What we are trying to do is personalize education. If you break up the school psychologist's job into expensive and inexpensive chuncks, you isolate the psychologist from the very data that is needed to carry out the job. Saying 'hello' could be provided by others--but would you find it desirable or advantageous to organize your life to that degree of effeciency? If we are going to be honest, let's also be reasonable.

WHAT PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES COULD BE DONE ELSEWHERE OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL SYSTEM?

Problems which need specialized treatment, such as twenty-four hour supervision, alcoholism, physical or sexual abuse, and criminal justice system involvement are probably best handled by specialized agencies outside of the school system.

ISN'T THE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST BETTER EQUIPPED TO DEAL WITH THE EMOTIONAL REALM? WITH SOPHISTICATED, WELL-TRAINED TEACHERS AND CLINICAL CONSULTANTS, COULDN'T THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST BE ELIMINATED?

The clinical psychologist may be the agent of choice for severe emotional problems and chronic family dysfunction. However, most of the problems encountered in schools are of mild to moderate severity, and of recent origin. So the vast majority of school problems do not need the services of a clinically-trained psychologist.

Working out of a medically oriented clinic does not prepare a psychologist for the social realities and limitations of the public schools. Clinical psychologists do not have a good track record in learning to cope in

this different environment. It is not difficult to understand--their training prepared them to work in an entirely different setting. School psychologists are trained to work in schools.

It is doubtful that you could receive the same level of service by the system you propose.

I UNDERSTAND THE MENTAL HELATH CLINIC DOES PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS FOR $100 EACH. WOULDN'T THAT BE CHEAPER AND BETTER THAN HIRING A PSYCHOLOGIST IN THE SCHOOL?

It may be penny wise and pound foolish. If that was all that you got from your school psychologist--a psychological evaluation--then you should probably find the cheapest source for evaluations. But what do you do with that page full of test scores on Monday morning?

School psychologists provide a full spectrum of services. Psychological evaluations are only one service. Included in the other services is the consultation your teachers will need to turn that report into a strategy that can be implemented. Also included in those other services is the skill in observation and human performance measurement that will let you know if that strategy is working. By keeping the school psychologist on staff, you will have someplace to go when the situation changes and the old strategy needs revising. At this point, we haven't covered half of the other services yet--you can find a listing of those in other portions of this publication.

Yes--you could spend your $100 that way. But when you consider all of the factors, would you want to choose that option?

IF OBJECTIVITY IS THE KEY TO EVALUATION, WOULDN'T AN OUTSIDE AGENT OR AGENCY BE PREFERABLE TO SOMEONE EMPLOYED BY THE SCHOOLS?

Objectivity is not the key to evaluation. A standardized system for measurement is the key. By keeping chance sources of error to a minimum, we can increase the accuracy of the description given by an evaluation.

Objectivity is a goal, not a character trait. We all have people with whom we find it difficult to work well. A trained examiner is supposed to realize when a student's performance is hindered by the examiner, and ask to be removed from the case. There is no reason to believe that

examiners hired by an outside agency would be immune to this situation, and there are several advantages to having an examiner as part of the regular staff.

WOULD REDUCING THE TEACHER LOAD IN THE SCHOOL LESSEN THE NEED FOR THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS?

Some people argue that the very presence of special education (and school psychologists) is proof that American public schools are failing to personalize education. If schools were truly committed to individualized education, class sizes would already be small enough to allow this to happen. Since it is clear that we give teachers too many children to educate on a personal level, schools have created subsystems to help children who fail to achieve.

A more moderate approach suggests that, even with small classes, teachers could benefit from the information school psychologists could provide. Certain behavior and academic problems which are directly tied to class size are likely to disappear in smaller classes. But there will continue to be children from stressful homes, and children who are difficult to teach due to their physical make-up.

Reducing classroom loads would not eliminate the need for school psychologists. Reducing loads would probably make school psychologists more effecient consultants since the primary change agents--the teachers--would have more time to try out recommendations.

WHAT IF YOUR DEPART MENT'S SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY BUDGET WAS DECREASED BY 50%. WHAT CHANGES WOULD TAKE PLACE? WHAT WOULD BE THE CONSEQUENCES?

That large a budget cut would result in a reduction in staff. Fewer school psychologists would result in larger caseloads per psychologist and less frequent visits to any particular school. Travel time would likely increase. The amount of time available for each child, teacher, and family would decrease.

The consequences would be as follows:
--a longer wait between referral and first contact.
--reduced or non-existent direct service.
--waiting lists for direct services. --superficial understanding of the problem.
--inadequate recommendations.
--reduced or non-existent follow-up.

--probably no corrolary services.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:COULD WE ELIMINATE THE MIDDLE MEN--THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION AND THE INTERMEDIATE UNITS. THIS WOULD ELIMINATE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES AND ALLOW SCHOOLS TO CONTRACT FOR WHAT THEY WANT. IF THAT HAPPENED, WOULD IT ENHANCE LOCAL CONTACT?

We project that it would enhance selected local budgets only. Those communities that supported quality education would probably provide a full range of services by contract. Those schools who considered only the short-range bottom line would cut support services, only to have additional expenses later when those small learning problems became huge social problems. The quality of service would likely become extremely variable. Families who needed the services would move to districts with the services, placing an overburden on those quality-minded communities.

In short, we would predict a mess. There is probably a less severe approach to cost conservation.

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE NEEDS, DIRECTIONS, FINANCES FOR SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES BY 1985?

Get out the crystal ball!

First, let's assume that the financial picture is not likely to improve greatly by 1985. Even if the economy does turn around, we doubt that taxpayers are going to be enthusiastic about increasing taxes that were lowered to reduce government influence in the daily lives of the people. So money is likely to be very tight in 1985.

Reduced finances will mean reduced staff. There will probably be fewer teachers as well as fewer school psychologists. There is a possibility that more special education students will be managed in regular classrooms, since special education funds will be reduced. Activities which are now commonplace, such as routine intelligence assessment of most children referred, will probably be dropped except for cases which absolutely require IQ scores.

Probably, the most cost-effective service will place the school psychologist in the classroom more than is now typical. The luxury of a leisurely and lengthy assessment

will give way to direct behavioral assessment. Teachers will need help designing environments which can reasonably teach a wide range of abilities, reinforce appropriate behavior, and model adaptive social behavior. Given a severe lack of staff, an in-the-class behavioral school psychologist is likely to survive and be valued by district staff as well.

WHAT IF WE JUST ELIMINATED ALL SPECIALISTS AND PUT THE MONEY INTO PROVIDING SMALLER CLASSES--WOULD THAT DO AS MUCH FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF THE STUDENTS? WHAT EFFECT WOULD THAT HAVE?

Smaller classes is a step in the right direction. This would enable each teacher to spend more time with any given student. Many behaavior problems can be avoided by close attention, and students can be kept from accidently practicing errors during independent seatwork. However, if you place students with special needs into those smaller classes, the teachers will still need help deciding on the correct course.

School psychologists help to personalize education--smaller classes would help to bring that about. But since only a few of our problems are caused by class size alone, smaller classes would still have their share of students who need the school psychologist's involvement.

IF PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES WERE EXPANDED, WHAT SERVICES COULD BE PROVIDED THAT ARE NOT NOW DUE TO LACK OF PERSONNEL OR FINANCIAL LIMITATIONS?

Not all of the following services are necessarily waiting for better days. Some districts do provide a full range of psychological services. But if we can imagine a more backward district which now provides a bare minimum of service, these areas might be added:

--service to non-handicapped.
--increased consultation with teachers.
--increased consultation with parents.
--prevention activities as oppposed to crisis intervention.
--program evaluation.
--curriculum design.
--individual and group therapy.
--increased inservice training for staff.

WHAT IF YOU COULD CREATE THE IDEAL SERVICE--HOW DO YOU BELIEVE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS SHOULD BE SPENDING THEIR TIME?

One-third problem identification and intervention-planning.

One-third direct intervention, including prevention activities.

One-third applied research into effective teaching systems and placements, effects of educational decisions, and matching student needs with intervention plans.

IF YOU COULD DECIDE, WHAT KIND OF PRIORITY SHOULD SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES HAVE? IF FUNDS ARE REDUCED, WHY SHOULDN'T WE ELIMINATE OR CUT BACK ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES?

School psychological services cannot be viewed separately from the district in which the service is employed. Depending on the orientation of the district, the priority rating can be high or low.

If the district is commmitted to providing a quality education for every child, school psychological services would have a high priority rating. The types of skills the school psychologist brings will help to personalize education for every child in the district. A school psychologist functioning from a consultation model can have an effect on handicapped, non-handicapped, and at-risk children. The skills of other staff can be increased as information and methodology from the field of psychology is applied to everyday problems and concerns. It would be easy to provide individualized quality education with school psychological services--it would be difficult without them.

Now, if the district is committed to mass education, where the student has to fit an arbitrary, predetermined series of learning events or fail in the system, then school psychoogy would have a low pirority rating. Most of the activities of the school psychologist in this type of school district would be in direct oppposition to the intended outcomes. Here there would be little interest in personalizing education, or in applying information from the field of psychology. The distict would probably not value the service, and would welcome the oppportunity to cut the service in the name of budget limitations.

# APPENDIX

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These people were kind enough to answer the Assistance to the States survey questions. Their responses formed the framework upon which the answers in this publication were built. The editor appreciates their efforts and the high degree of professionalism which was evident in their responses.

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